

Budget testimony focuses on four priorities

On April 26 I testified before the Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, District of Columbia of the House Committee on Appropriations regarding the President's proposed FY 2006 budget for NARA. I would like to take this opportunity to report what I told the members of the subcommittee, focusing on four areas of major importance to NARA: the Electronic Records Archives (ERA), the Nixon Library, the National Archives Experience, and the issue of document security.

In August 2004, NARA awarded contracts for design and development of the Electronic Records Archives system to Harris Corporation of Melbourne, FL, and Lockheed Martin Corporation of Bethesda, MD. This August, one of the contractors will be selected to proceed with development of the system. NARA has requested nearly \$36 million for this program in FY 2006. These funds are necessary for program management, for electronic records research, and primarily for the detailed design and development of the first phase of the system.

Three key components of the National Archives Experience—the William G. McGowan Theater, the Lawrence F. O'Brien Gallery, and the "Public Vaults" exhibit—were completed in the last year. All of these have been made possible by the public-private partnership of the National Archives and the Foundation for the National Archives, which, to date, has raised more than \$18 million from citizens, foundations, and corporations committed to the advance of civics education and public enrichment through the public records. It is my personal goal and NARA's to work with the Foundation to take this success and build on it nationally: to provide access to the National Archives Experience through the Internet; to expand our exhibit programs across the country; and to join with partners in unleashing the power of primary sources to advance the cause of American history and civics education.

I believe that the National Archives Experience is one of the best exhibits one can experience anywhere, and this is not just my opinion. In January and February, the market research firm of WB&A interviewed a sample of 1,136 visitors. Ninety-six percent stated that they were very satisfied



or extremely satisfied with their visits. Forty-seven percent of all visitors reported spending an hour or more at the National Archives in comparison to just 13 percent reporting visits of that length in a similar study in the 1990s. This survey provides strong evidence that the National Archives Experience has positively influenced the enjoyment and engagement of the public in the Archives.

I have long supported Presidential libraries and look forward to the Nixon Library becoming a part of the NARA system. Great progress has been achieved towards this end, including an agreement for the transfer of the library. First and foremost, the library will be operated in accordance with National Archives statutes, regulations, and practices governing the Nixon materials and Presidential libraries. The transfer of the library could take place as early as February 2006, provided that its required retrofit is completed and that funding is available to offset costs for the operation of the library. Arrangements are being made for the donation of two groups of historically important materials: Nixon's pre- and post-Presidential documents and the personal-political conversations from the Nixon recordings.

I assured the congressional subcommittee that regulations currently governing the Nixon Presidential materials will remain in place, and that all the papers, tapes, and other records will remain under the control of NARA. I believe that the new Nixon Presidential library will serve NARA and the public well as it will contain all of Richard Nixon's papers in one place: pre-Presidential, Presidential, and post-Presidential.

Regarding document security, NARA has undertaken a number of initiatives, among them: we have installed or are in the process of installing video cameras in all of our research rooms; we are creating several pilot projects including special markings on documents of high intrinsic value; a special classified research room is now in operation at Archives I; and we are developing a new

web site to help recover lost and stolen documents. Security and preservation of documents is the first task of any archivist, and it is certainly of primary concern to this Archivist.

In response to questions posed by Chairman Knollenberg and other subcommittee members, I reiterated my personal support for restoration of funding for the NHPRC. The chairman and other subcommittee members, on a bipartisan basis, also expressed support for the commission. I was especially pleased by the complimentary remarks concerning NARA's work in general made by these members of Congress.

As you know, this spring we are celebrating, with appropriate programs on NARA's past, present, and future, our 20th anniversary as an independent Government agency. In doing this, we honor our basic mission of preserving and assuring timely, maximum access for the American people to our governmental records; thus, we help not only to assure the continuing liberties of our own citizens, but we display for the entire world an essential component of a healthy democracy. All who work for NARA are the designated custodians of America's national memory.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Weinstein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ALLEN WEINSTEIN
Archivist of the United States

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